

*Field Naturalists
Club of Ballarat*
Incorporated

NOVEMBER 1995

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting Nov 3 Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture
Ms J Williams - Rehabilitation of Gold Mine
Sites. (Venue - St Cuthbert's Hall, Elliot St)

Meeting Dec 1 Dr G Ambrose - Butterflies in Remnant
Vegetation

Excursion Nov 5 Mine Rehabilitation, Stawell - Ms J Williams

Excursion Dec 3 Sky Dancers Butterfly Farm, Harcourt -
Mrs M Rotheram



To stimulate interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation and protection of the natural environment.

President: Mr J Gregurke
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Mr G Binns
Editor: Mr A Dyson

MEETINGS are held at the School of
Mines & Industries, Art Building,
Lydiard St. Sth., 7.30 pm.
EXCURSIONS start at "Book Chy",
cnr Sturt and Annatrong Sts 9.30 am
(full day outings) or 1.30 pm (half day)

FIELD REPORTS

Dulcie Brooke - recently attended the First International Conference on the Biology and Conservation of Albatrosses in Hobart. Of particular concern is the future of the Wandering Albatross. Hooks on long line fishing vessels have resulted in many deaths. Simple "safety measures" should be emphasised - such as using streamers behind the boats and switching to night fishing.

John Gregurke and Margaret Rotheram - attended a Royal Horticultural Society visit to Mt Beckworth. There were many orchids flowering including an "albino" Wax-lip orchid. Also many Blue Fairies. Very robust Creamy Stackhousia with thick stems. John emphasised that Mt Beckworth is well worth a visit.

John Stayt - mentioned two noteworthy experiences on a recent trip around Australia. a group of Southern Right Whales near Port Lincoln - one of which was albino. It is apparently unusual to see such a large group. North east of Toowoomba a sighting of the timid Albert's Lyrebird.

Margaret Tonkin - in the Mt Misery area - noticed a wide variety of calling frogs.

Carol Hall - brought our attention to the latest edition of *Australian Geo* which includes an article on the pollination of Greenhood orchids.

Alan Morrison - a group of 14 Crested Pigeons feeding around a horse trough at Mt Rowan. Apparently they have been feeding there for about 5 years. They are probably attracted by grain and stock food. Alan had also seen a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles at Mt Cole and noticed a very large plovers nest made up of plastic and other material in a pine tree in Windmill Drive.



Ken McDonnell - a group of 40 to 50 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos foraging on an apparently bare and salt affected paddock at Invermay. Ken wondered if minerals present were the attraction.

Pat Murphy - a variety of regrowth evident at Berringa after fires. Presence of several birds including orioles, Scarlet Robin and Spotted Quail-thrush.

Helen Burgess - a group of flying Sulphur-crested Cockatoos spiralling while being followed by others.

Margaret Rotheram - visited the Peregrine Falcon nesting site at Devils Kitchen, Pigoreet. Scientists from the Arthur Rylah Institute were checking the nests. One nest contained 2 underweight eggs. Eggs are normally a rich brown - in one nest there they found a white egg.

Lyndsay Fink - reported on a kangaroo breeder in the USA who has a thriving sideline in selling "roo poo".



DIARY DATES

17 - 19 Nov - Brisbane Ranges Club Campout

Wed 22 Nov 7.30pm - Committee Meeting at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (Tony Dyson)

Magnifying Lens

20 x Magnifying lens with measuring scale.

The club have arranged a bulk buy at a price of \$37 including sales tax and postage.

Please give orders with money to Greg Binns by Friday 10 November.

Creswick Excursion
1995

Sunday 8th October,

The accurate way to identify plants is using a key. Following Friday evenings talk, Ron Hateley was going to teach us how to use his key for peas in the field.

We first visited Ron's office at the Forestry School where we saw how useful a key on a computer can be. Stored on a CD, the key can contain diagrams and photographs to illustrate the features which the key uses to discriminate and identify plants. Laptop computers could be taken into the field.

Several of the Family Fabaceae are weeds in our local forests. These include Gorse, Cape Broom, English Broom. White Spanish Broom, Flaxleaf Broom and Spiny Broom. Cape Broom from the Mediterranean, has many features which makes it a dangerous weed. It is spreading along roadsides. Its seeds have a hard coat. Fire stimulates germination but 18% of the seeds can germinate without fire. The explosive pods can shoot seeds up to 3 metres. There is no seed loss from the plants before seed dispersal. The juvenile period of the plant is short, it can flower and reproduce within 2 years. The seed has an aril attached to it which attracts ants who spread seeds further. Roadside management of slashing and burning makes the problem worse - at Smythesdale plant densities up to 790 plants per square metre have been recorded.

We inspected experimental tree plots near the nursery. Fertilizer, weed control, insect control and provenance are being investigated. The results will help farmers setting up farm forestry enterprises. We flushed several Japanese Snipe out of the grassy areas on the hillside of the experimental area.

Driving past St Georges Lake a Little Raven grabbed the single duckling walking along behind its parents. The Little Raven flew away with its prey.

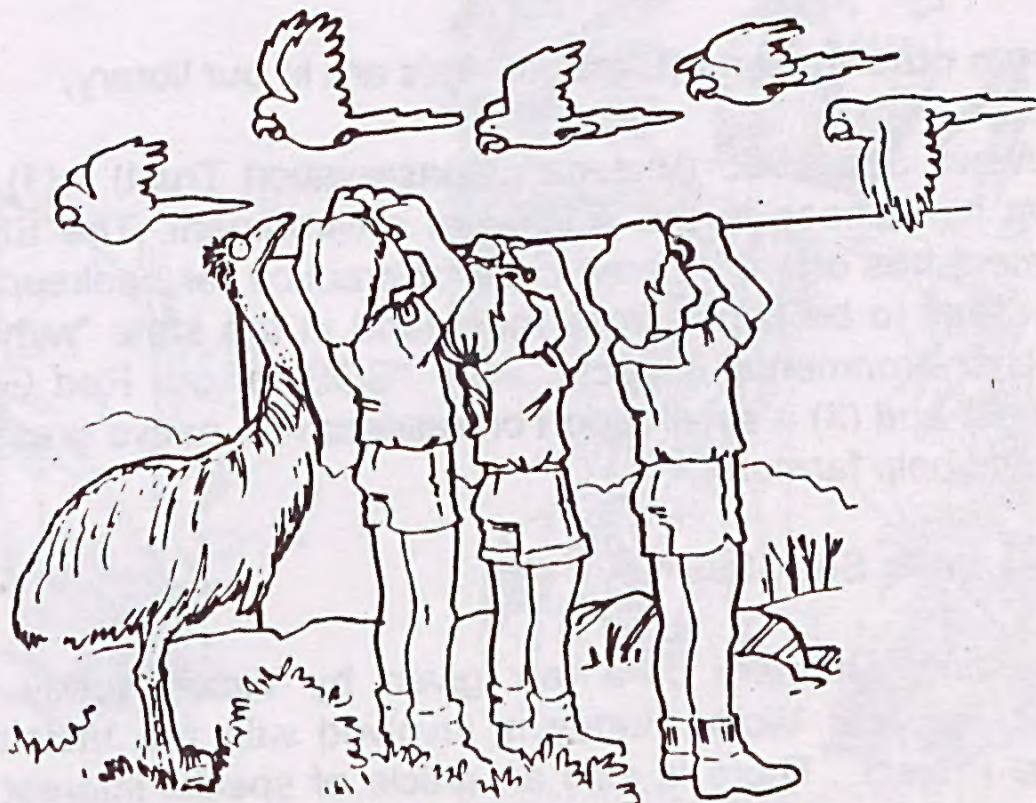




During the afternoon we used the key prepared by Ron to identify many members of Family Fabaceae. A hand lens was necessary to observe the diagnostic characteristics such as the arrangement of the stamens and the presence of stipules or bracteoles. Leaf arrangement, size and shape were easier to see. We were able to find and key out Grey Parrot-pea *Dillwynia cinerascens*, Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea *Daviesia leptophylla*, Matted Bossiaea *Bossiaea buxifolia*, Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea* and Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata*. Keying out these species helped us to become familiar with most of the characteristics used in the key.

The clay pit area once supported a community of Silver Banksia *Banksia marginata* and Black Sheoak *Allocasuarina littoralis*. There is some regeneration of these plants around the margins, but we can never be sure what other plants may have originally grown in these small specialised communities.

We thank Ron Hateley for preparing the Fabaceae key and leading the excursion. JG.



RAMSAR CONVENTION

An article in *Wildlife News* (World Wide Fund for Nature) of August 1995 concerns Ramsar. In March 1996 Brisbane hosts the 25th Anniversary meeting of the Ramsar Convention. Signed in 1971 at Ramsar in Iran, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat is the world's oldest international conservation agreement. 80 countries are signatories and about 600 wetland sites have been listed. Signatories are required to promote both the conservation of listed sites and the "wise use" of all wetlands. There are 42 listed sites in Australia. The article states that despite such commitment wetlands in Australia continue to be degraded. Inland rivers are starved of natural flow by excessive demands for irrigation, or polluted with runoff from farm sewage. Lakes have been drowned or drained. Coastal bays and beaches have been lost by "development" - the article emphasises that Australia will "need to make special efforts to live up to the challenge of wetland conservation".

News from other groups (these journals are in our library)

Nature News Sep 1995 (Victorian Conservation Trust) - (1) an article on honeybees in the Australian environment. The State Government has drafted a new code of practice for beekeeping allowing bees to be kept across most land in the state "without regard to environmental impacts". (2) "SOS for our Red Gum Woodlands" and (3) a small report on research on native grasses which could help farmers.

***Field Nats News* Sep 1995**

An interesting summary of a talk given by Victor Hurley on Peregrine Falcons. Victor Hurley is involved with the Victorian Peregrine Project. There is also an article of special interest to

us at the moment on revegetation work on the Bendigo Goldfields.

Land for Wildlife News Aug 1995 (DCNR)

Articles on native grasses, grazing management plans and on reptiles in a fragmented rural environment. There are detailed reports on (1) - Natural Regeneration - Case studies in bushland, and (2) - Dieback lessons: learning how to manage sustainably. These two reports give references and further reading suggestions.

(Note: the Dysons will have these journals on hand at the November meeting if anyone wishes to borrow them)



Vigilance in the control of foxes is essential for the survival of lyrebirds in many areas, particularly where their habitat is fragmented.

Australien Mammals Found in the Ballarat Area No8

Goulds Wattled Bat.

Chalinolobus gouldii, Order Chiroptera, Sub
Order Microchiroptera, Family Vespertilionidae.

One of the most widespread throughout Australia and occasionally Norfolk Island, Goulds Wattled Bat inhabits almost all Australia including urban areas, tree hollows, birds nests, ceilings basements, rolled up blinds and even tractor exhausts are used for roosts, while it's food varies with the time of the year, beetes, field crickets and moths are eaten.

Usually about 30 in a colony but from 1 to 100 may be found. Females give birth September to December and twins are common.

Disturbance seems to have a deleterious effect on continually monitoring of a colony.

Their status is abundant, there are three sub species.

They are common in and around Ballarat.

Chocolate Wattled Bat

Chalinolobus morio

About 20 minutes after sunset the Chocolate Bat emerges from it's roost to forage for small moths, it flies at moderate speed with considerable manoeuvrability, Colonies range from 20 usuallly, but up to 200.

Tree hollows appear to be their favoured roost but caves, in roofs and similar places, theit is a cave dwelling group is at Alice Springs. In Southern Australia they hibernate in winter, birth takes place December to January, ther is one area in Southern Australia where at least seven other breeds compete for food, as they tend to hibernate at different times to the others although food is scarce it is guaranteed. Their status is common, there are no sub species. They would be found in the Ballarat area.

Elfin.